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ARTILLERY SOLDIERS WITH V CORPS' 1ST ARMORED DIVISION HAVE UNIQUE MISSION OF GUARDING NAJAF GOVERNOR

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AN NAJAF, Iraq – Soldiers from Bravo Battery of the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery of V Corps' Task Force 1st Armored Division literally have the life of the governor of An Najaf in their hands.

The battery has been tasked with the unique mission of guarding the governor's compound and keeping him safe.

"He receives daily assassination threats," said Capt. Brandon Anderson, Bravo Battery commander. "It's the (Muqtada Militia's) attempt to undermine the coalition."

Anderson and his men have secured a block around the compound and nearby government buildings. They are assisting Iraqi Police Service Officers and the governor's personal bodyguards in guarding the area.

A small contingent of Bravo troops lives close to the governor, while the rest of the battery works and lives nearby. They help keep the compound and surrounding area secure.

It's an interesting challenge for field artillery Soldiers, but the "Bulldog" troops say they are adapting quickly to their new mission.

"Everybody is tired and ready to go (home,)" said section chief Staff Sgt. Wallace Stevens, "(but) we are ready to do what we have to."

"We have a lot of guys (new to the Army). For them, this deployment is all they know of the Army," Anderson said. "As far as they know, this is what field artillerymen do."

Bravo's mission here is drastically different from the battery's prior Baghdad assignment. In the capital, the unit's Soldiers conducted approximately 84 major raids, countless patrols and participated in August's Operation Longstreet near Fallujah, said Anderson. He joked that the Army may have to amend its basic field artillery doctrine, based on the varied missions artillerymen have undertaken in Iraq.

That diversity has been an interesting sort of education for some of the battery's Soldiers, such as Spc. Benjamin Morse. Morse is the medic for an artillery battery that's taken on an "infantry-like" mission.

"When I got assigned to field artillery I wanted to know what it was like in an infantry unit," he said. "Now I pretty much know."

Living and working in and around the governor's compound may seem like a "plush assignment," but it's not all that cushy. Even the governor -- and the troops who stay close to him -- lives without some creature comforts. His living quarters are nearly empty and electrical power is a sporadic commodity. The rest of the battery takes up residence in vacant offices down the road, where electricity is even less reliable and there is limited running water.

But Morse said that in spite of the conditions and the "un-artillery-ness" of the battery's mission here, its Soldiers came at their task here head-on.

"They started working to improve conditions as soon as we got here," said Anderson.

"They never cease to amaze me."

